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NIGERIA INTEGRATED AGRICULTURE ACTIVITY NEWSLETTER, 20TH EDITION, JANUARY 2023



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Nigeria Integrated Agriculture Activity Newsletter, 20th Edition, January 2023

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Indian High Commissioner to Nigeria Calls for Collaboration in Agriculture



The Indian High Commissioner to Nigeria, Mr. Shri G Balasubramanian, has called for collaboration in agriculture between the two countries. The High Commissioner made the call when he visited the Abuja Office of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) on January 27, 2023, alongside Additional Secretary. Mr. Abhilaksh Likhi, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare of Government of India.

According to the High Commissioner, Nigeria, and India have a long-standing,

beneficial relationship. "I am hereby proposing a farmer-based organization partnership for production, processing, and other activities in the agriculture value chain". Balasubramanian said that both countries could further benefit from farmer-managed extension services and farmer-participatory research. He promised that the commission would fast-track the signing of an MoU between India and relevant agencies in Nigeria. He also said Nigeria could key into the gigantic horticultural market of India.



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Mr. Likhi, on his part, advocated for the needs of farmers in both countries. "The role of farmers in a nation cannot be overemphasized. If we provide necessary inputs for farmers, they will increase their productivity to the benefit of the nations", he said.

The important guests were received by the Chief of Party, Integrated Agriculture Activity, Mr. Prakash Kant Silwal, in the company of the Country Director, International Crops Research

Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), Dr. Hakeem Ajeigbe, alongside other staff of IITA. Mr. Silwal expressed pleasure at receiving the High Commissioner and his entourage. He briefed the delegation on IITA's exceptional work in agriculture. "Our commitment to food security is paramount. That is why we continue to carry out constant research to improve food varieties and eventual yields". He, therefore, promised to intimate IITA's management of possible future partnerships.



Indian High Commissioner to Nigeria, Mr. Shri Balasubramanian (2nd left) flanked by Additional Secretary, India's Ministry of Agriculture & Farmer's Welfare, Dr. Abhilaksh Likhi (2nd right), Chief of Party, Integrated Agriculture Activity, Mr. Prakash Kant Silwal (right) and Country Director, International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), Dr. Hakeem Ajeigbe (left) during the visit.



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Integrated Agriculture Activity Joins Others to Celebrate International Year of Millet 2023

In a well-attended event organized by the Indian High Commission to Nigeria in Abuja, Feed the Future Nigeria Integrated Agriculture Activity along with other organizations participated in the 2023 International Year of Millet celebration. The celebration which was organized in collaboration with Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) had dignitaries from India, Nigeria, Indonesia, the Czech Republic, South Korea, and other nationals in attendance.

In his remarks, the Indian High Commissioner to Nigeria, Mr. Shri G. Balasubramanian; said 2023 was declared

the 'International Year of Millet' after India made the proposal which was supported by 70 other countries of the world. In fact, Nigeria as a long-standing ally had co-sponsored the resolution which was subsequently approved by the United Nations. Balasubramanian explained that the crop has the potential for global production, diverse processing, crop rotation, and a functional food system. In his words, "the High Commission of India in Nigeria is intentional about promoting this healthy cereal which by the way, is affordable and highly nourishing." He said Nigeria and India are major producers of millet, a crop that is processed in several



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ways and can compete with other staple crops such as rice and wheat.

The major attraction of the event was a cooking competition that featured 16 contestants and an array of judges including staff of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), and ambassadors of foreign countries among others. Participants in the day's millet exhibition included Integrated Agriculture Activity, the International Crops Research

Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), the Nigerian Export Promotion Council, and the Farmers Association of Nigeria.

Coincidentally, millet is one of Integrated Agriculture Activity's focus crops. Smallholder farmers in Adamawa and Borno States have received immense input support from the Activity since 2019 in cultivating millet. The crop's high nutritive value has also been harnessed by the nutrition team in teaching beneficiaries about nourishing family meals with a special focus on meals that aid rapid growth in children aged 5 and under. Foods made from millet at the Activity's stand during the special event include composite flour, doughnuts, buns, pasta, and assorted drinks.



Participants at the International Year of Millets 2023 celebration in Abuja



Chief of Party, Integrated Agriculture Activity, Mr. Prakash Kant Silwal (right) accompanied by a guest joins nutrition officers, Rebecca Tumba (left) and Blessing Edwin (2nd left) at the Activity's stand during the celebration.



Tasting Time!: One of the judges, Integrated Agriculture Activity's Market Systems and Livelihood Specialist, Mr. Bassey Archibong (middle), tastes the meals prepared by contestants during the cooking competition at the international event.





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Expanded Scope: 'We Meuuve!'

The younger generation users of the Nigerian social media space employ several 'slangs' in local languages and Nigerian Pidgin English to capture the essence of the socio-political atmosphere. These words may sometimes pose a semantic obstacle to non-Nigerians who have not come in solid linguistic contact with a typical Nigerian. Examples of such slang are "Who dey breeett?" (Who is breathing?) which means 'who has the audacity to raise an eyebrow?'; "E Choke" (It chokes) is translated literally as 'I am flabbergasted by something or someone. 'We meuuve' (we move) refers to a call to advance in any situation.

With the expanded scope (Modification 003) approved by USAID in September 2022, the appropriate Nigerian slang that best describes Feed the Future Nigeria Integrated Agriculture Activity at this time is 'we meuuve'. With remarkable results to show in Adamawa and Borno States, we are indeed advancing to Gombe and Yobe, an entirely new terrain, with full force. This time, the Activity will be working with a total of 2,250 Community -Based Seed Entrepreneurs (450 each from Gombe and Yobe States; 1350 from the existing repertoire of Community-Based Seed Producers in Adamawa and Borno States). What has changed? These individuals will be supported to become seed entrepreneurs and not merely producers in the seed system value chain. Interestingly, 40 percent of this number will be women, 30% will be youth while 10% are expected to be nternationally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Arrangements are being concluded with major

agricultural stakeholders like the National Agricultural Seeds Council (NASC), and State Agricultural Development Programmes (ADP) to actualize the plan between now and December 31, 2024, when the Activity is currently scheduled to close.

Additionally, the nutrition and gender components of the Activity will continue with their varied interventions but with a concentration on the households of these Community-Based Seed Entrepreneurs (CBSEs). Across the four states, the Activity will work with 900 women and 675 young people. The Activity also continues to employ its market systems approach, partner with relevant government nutrition and gender agencies, and seek private sector participation in alleviating the livelihood challenges of the beneficiaries. So, regardless of the enormity of the assignment, 'we meuuve'!



Staff of Integrated Agriculture Activity meet with their counterparts at Mercy Corps' Rural Resilience Activiity office in Gombe to finalize partnership plans for the expanded scope.



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When the newly-pregnant bride, Zara Abubakar, told her husband that she wanted to attend the ante-natal clinic at the local maternity in Miringa, Biu, Borno State, he blatantly refused. He insisted that his wife would be delivered her baby at a traditional home stating family tradition as a major reason. Eventually, Zara suffered a miscarriage. She yet had another miscarriage. When she got pregnant the third time, Zara pleaded with her husband about the importance of registering at the clinic. When he was still hesitant, Zara invited Fatimah Mohammed, a nutrition promoter with Integrated Agriculture Activity to intervene. After much persuasion, Zara's husband agreed but insisted that she delivers at the traditional home.

"The ante-natal clinic was so much fun. I met different would-be mothers -first-timers and old-timers. The old-timers would share their experiences; likewise, the first-timers. We sang songs and played games. More importantly, we were taught how to prepare for the birth of our babies.

“My baby is ‘IAA baby’” – First Time Mother

I was always grateful to Mallama Fatimah anytime I returned from the clinic". Luckily, Zara gave birth to a baby girl. Mallama Fatimah encouraged her to practice exclusive breastfeeding and invited her to nutrition events organized by IAA in the community.

"My baby is eight months now. I have never taken her to the hospital for any sickness whatsoever. All because I learned the importance of breastfeeding. Exactly why I call her IAA baby. Even after six months of exclusive breastfeeding, they told me about the right cereals for her. Because my baby is healthy, my husband encourages me to attend nutrition events organized by Mallama Fatimah. I am so grateful to IAA, IITA, and USAID".



First time mom, Zara Abubakar demonstrates how she breastfeeds her eight-month old daughter in the presence of nutrition promoter, Fatimah Mohammed.



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“IAA Empowered Me” – Beneficiary

Like most 35-year-old smallholder farmers living in rural Nigeria, Ejirge Barnard is faced with the challenges of raising his own family. Meeting primary and secondary needs usually requires a lot of calculation.

“We know what Nigeria is today. My wife and children are always coming up with needs. The house rent is there. School fees are there. Sometimes, hospital bills will just come up without thinking of it. Being a man is never easy in this country.... So when my friend asked me if I was interested in joining a group that contributes and that I will get my money without any ‘masala’, I doubted it at first. But when I heard I can also borrow money and not with the kind of trouble from banks, I said I must join this one.”

Ejirge joined Arbuwa Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) Group in Guyuk LGA, Adamawa State. The 25-member group under Feed the Future Nigeria Integrated Agriculture Activity meets frequently to



Ejirge's newly purchased motorcycle

contribute money for their basic needs, hold share-outs, and lend money to registered members.

Ejirge’s membership also provided an opportunity to be trained in entrepreneurship through the Activity.

“IAA taught me how to start and manage a small business. I learned how to save money and not eat up both profit and capital. The knowledge I gave through the training encouraged me to start my own business”.

After the share-out, Ejirge received his portion of the group’s contribution – NGN128,000. With this amount, he purchased a brand-new threshing machine for soybeans, maize, and sorghum. Within nine months of starting the business, Ejirge realized N300,000 with which he bought a plough for his farmland and a motorcycle for easy transportation.

“I wouldn’t have been able to do all this without IAA, IITA, and USAID. They have empowered me so much! Because of the steady income, I am resuming my schooling at Kaduna Polytechnic. No longer will my children’s education suffer because of lack of money”.



Ejirge Barnard poses with his threshing machine purchase through his SILC contribution.



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About the Activity

The Feed the Future Nigeria Integrated Agriculture Activity (IAA) issued under the US Government's Global Food Security Act was awarded by USAID Nigeria to the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and its partners in July 2019 towards the economic recovery of North-East Nigeria, in the wake of the devastation caused by the ongoing insurgency in the region. The Activity supports vulnerable populations in 12 Local Government Areas of Adamawa and Borno states to re-engage in basic farming activities and aims to advance the objectives of inclusive and sustainable agriculture-led economic growth, strengthened resilience among people and systems, and a well-nourished population, especially among women and children in targeted locations.

To achieve these objectives, the Activity works with a coalition of public and private sector partners to facilitate improved agro-input and extension advisory services to serve vulnerable populations; strengthen the institutions that form the market system and the networks that serve smallholder farmers disenfranchised by conflict, and facilitate the engagement of youth and women in economic and entrepreneurial activities.

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